

Comparing Myself With Other People, Part 1 - Romans 3:9-12 – July 17th, 2011

- In the text that we've just read, the beloved Apostle has put his finger on that which I believe is one of the most serious problems in our lives.
- By peeling back the layers and looking beneath the surface, what's found is that it's the cause of marriage problems, financial problems, et al.
- It causes problems for pastors and churches and it's an enormous problem when we share the gospel, hoping to lead someone to Christ.
- So, what's the problem? Comparing myself with other people! It's also the title for this new series, and today will be part one, here's why:
- Comparing myself to others causes financial problems because I buy things I don't need with money I don't have to impress people I don't like.
- Comparing myself to others causes marital problems because the grass will start looking greener on the other side of the fence, so-to-speak.
- Comparing myself to others causes spiritual problems because I won't see myself as being as bad of a person as the one I'm comparing to.
- Comparing myself to others causes ministerial problems because the other church is larger with more to offer making me try to grow mine.
- This explains why we have this writing by Paul here in the Epistle of Romans. He's up against a Jewish constituency who are doing just that.
- This is precisely the problem that he will now address, as we see the first danger of comparing myself to other people beginning in verse nine.

1. I will see myself as better than others (Verse 9)

(9) What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin.

- v9 Paul rhetorically asks then answers the question by way of conclusion that Jews are no better than the Gentiles because both are under sin.
- It's important to understand, when the Jews compared themselves with the Gentiles, they saw themselves as being superior to the Gentiles.
- So much so that even to this day millions of Jews all over the world will pray a prayer out of the Sidur (Jewish Prayer Book) that goes like this:

"Blessed are you, Hashem, King of the Universe, for not having made me a Gentile. Blessed are you, Hashem, King of the Universe, for not having made me a slave. Blessed are you, Hashem, King of the Universe, for not having made me a woman."

- To say that Paul's conclusion, and charge that Jews and Gentiles are all alike, under sin, would have been explosive, is an understatement.
- Paul says this, in this way, because he's speaking as a Jew, to the Jew, so that the Jew won't see himself as being better than the Gentile.
- Here-to-fore, the beloved Apostle has had to, by the Holy Spirit, ever so bluntly yet brilliantly, demolish the structure of their Jewish superiority.
- He doesn't use a wrecking ball, he uses explosives to implode their high minded tower, trapping them, with Gentiles under the rubble of sin.
- This is what God does with us, when we do, as did the Jew, and compare ourselves with those whom we've fancied ourselves as better than.
- If the truth be known, I will only compare myself with someone whom I perceive to be inferior to me, and if they're not, I will tear them down.
- When I become caustic, cutting, and condescending to another, it only exposes the insecurity of my inferiority, and my quest for a superiority.

Romans 12:3 NIV For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

- This is Peter. He not only thought more highly of himself than he ought he compared himself, seeing himself as better than the other disciples.

Matthew 26:31-35 NIV Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' (32) But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee." (33) Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will." (34) "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." (35) But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same.

2. I will see myself as a good person (Verses 10-12)

(10) As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one (11) there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. (12) All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

- v10 Paul now begins the quoting of seven Old Testament scriptures starting with the Psalms saying; there is no one righteous, not even one.
- v11 He continues on in quoting Psalms 14 which says not only is no one righteous, there's no one who understands, and no one seeks God.
- v12 He then tells them that all have turned away and together have become worthless, and that there is no one who does good, not even one.

- This is straight up, and head on, and it needed to be. The Jews were smug in their self-perceived righteousness seeing themselves as good.
- Not only are they not good, they do not understand, nor do they seek God. They've turned away, become worthless, and no one does good.
- Like rotten fruit is worthless, so too are we rotten, and unrighteous, because everyone has turned away from God, and no one seeks God.
- Question: "When you're sharing the Gospel with someone, don't they always say something like, I'm a good person, or, I'm still searching?"
- Or, they'll say something like; "I've never murdered anyone, or, I'm not as bad as some people are? Well, Paul just demolished all of them.
- The fact of the matter is that when compared to others, I may think I'm good, but it's not good enough, and I'm not seeking or searching either.

William Newell - "No human being has in himself ever been [good]. Even Adam was not righteous: he was innocent—not knowing good and evil. Let us put far from our minds the fond falsehoods of philosophy, science, and human "religions," that there have been men of our race who have attained to a standing before God in righteousness. ... Adam, sinning, turned his back and fled from a holy God. God had to take the place of the seeker: "Adam, where art thou?" So it has ever been. No human being has ever sought the holy God. ... Banish from your mind the idea that any human being has ever had a *holy* thought, or love for a *holy* God, in his natural heart! Grace is the old phrase expressing the truth that God Himself takes the place of the seeker, convicter, persuader, giver, and final perfecter of all man's salvation. His sovereign grace goes ahead of, and brings into being, all human response to God."

- Seeing myself as good disables me in my ability to respond to God, in the sense that I will see myself as being so good that I become a god.
- Then, when, not if, something bad happens, I will blame God, and accuse God, of allowing this bad thing to happen to me as a good person.
- When I realize I'm not good, then, when something good happens, I'll thank God for allowing this good thing to happen to me as a bad person.
- Seeing myself as a sinner, enables me to respond to other sinners, so when they do something bad, it's not so bad, because they're not good.
- Conversely, when a bad person does something good, I will become enchanted with them, not disappointed in them, or worse, hurt by them.
- Furthermore, when I compare myself with them, I will see that I'm a sinner, the same as them, and thus I am certainly not better than them.